

The Book Club of California

QUARTERLY NEWS-LETTER



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THE BOOK CLUB OF CALIFORNIA

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Note on the design: As part of a new series of historical tributes to early *QN-L* printers, this issue is based on the 1968 volume printed by Arlen and Clare Philpott in Fairfax. This issue is set in Spectrum and Smaragd types and printed by Norman Clayton in Ojai. Cover vignette by Malette Dean.



Henry, Patricia, and Judith Evans
The Peregrine Press and the Porpoise Bookshop: Part I
by John Crichton

By the middle of the twentieth century, Northern California was home to a prosperous antiquarian and secondhand book trade—a trade still in its prime, as we see now with the perspective of six decades. The economic and cultural conditions existed then for a business model that has become all but impossible to sustain today. It was also an environment that tolerated and even encouraged dissenters from the mainstream, and as a result a host of interesting and iconoclastic booksellers and bookstores thrived. One notable example was the Porpoise Bookshop in San Francisco, which flourished between 1945 and 1964. Owned and operated by Henry and Patricia Evans, with help from their daughter Judith, the Porpoise Bookshop was not only an antiquarian and secondhand bookstore, it was an art gallery and publishing house whose proprietors encouraged and collaborated with other artists and writers. This multifaceted business was a reflection of its polymath owners, the personable, bookish, and intelligent Evanses. Henry Evans was an exceptional bookman, in addition to being an accomplished writer, letterpress printer, artist, and later a famous botanical printmaker—talents that were nearly all self-taught. His wife, Patricia Healy Evans, was a fine illustrator, talented writer, compiler of enchanting books for children, and a full collaborator in Henry's endeavors. Judith, an only child, was involved in the business from a remarkably early age. At ten years old she was setting type and contributing artwork, both of which she continued throughout her teens. Their collected work, from elegant letterpress portfolios with block illustrations to whimsical booklets and the shop catalogs, shows a charm and *jeu d'esprit* that tells a story of booksellers thoroughly enjoying themselves—and entertaining others in the process. The Evanses' story has not previously been told in depth, and it deserves a place in the history of bookselling in California.

Linoleum block print by Patricia Evans for Porpoise Bookshop Catalog 11

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Henry Herman Evans was born in Superior, Wisconsin on May 16, 1918, the fifth child of Eastern European immigrants Phillip and Eleanor Evans. The surname Evans was one of the famous Ellis Island translations, in this case for the Ukrainian Ivanschuk or Evancheck. Henry's parents had come to America separately—his father from the Ukraine and his mother from Hungary—and met as co-workers in a cigarette factory in lower Manhattan. Within a few years they moved to Superior, a remote town on Lake Superior in the northernmost part of Wisconsin, where they established a small grocery store. Their son Henry was a precocious child who excelled at academic subjects, displaying from a young age a talent for writing and a special fascination with all aspects of book production. In his early teens Henry asked his mother for permission to take a printing class at school, but she did not see this as a proper course of study for her son, and he was instead steered to the more respectable subject of Latin, which would serve him well in later endeavors. But Henry's early interest in and exposure to printing and books led to a passion that would shape his future life.

When Henry was ready to matriculate to college, his older siblings had begun to abandon the isolation and unforgiving winters of northern Wisconsin. His brother Sam moved to San Francisco and went into the antiques business. Rather than accept a scholarship to the University of Wisconsin, Henry followed Sam's example and headed west, with the promise from his brother of free room and board upon arrival. In his first months in San Francisco Henry lived in the back of Sam's antiques store, held some odd jobs, and explored the neighborhoods of the famous city. Most notably he perused San Francisco's many secondhand and antiquarian bookstores—there were approximately sixty at the time—where he learned, among other things, that he could buy books for a dime from the Holmes Book Company and sell them to John Howell Books for a dollar. A bookseller was in the making.

In 1936 Henry attended classes at the University of California at Berkeley, followed by San Francisco Junior College (now City College of San Francisco). It was there that he met Patricia Dawn Healy. Patricia Healy had also been born in Wisconsin—in 1920—but had grown up in Northern California. The couple married in December 1938 and early the next year moved to Southern California, where their daughter, Judith Sherry, was born in 1940. Soon they moved again, further east to Tucson, Arizona, where Patricia's

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father, Harry T. Healy, was the comptroller of the University of Arizona. Both Henry and Patricia attended the University, where tuition was free to family members of employees, and in 1942 Henry graduated with a B.A. in education. During this time, he was also drafted into the Army, but a heart murmur prevented Henry from passing the physical, and he was instead required to work equivalent time on a railroad project in the civil service. Following graduation, Henry had a brief, unhappy stint teaching English at a local high school. In 1944 he and Patricia decided to give up on Arizona and return to San Francisco to open a bookstore.

Though Henry may have initially turned to teaching for practical purposes, his real interest lay in antiquarian, rare, and secondhand books, and he dreamed of someday becoming a printer. As a student, a great deal of Henry's spare time had been spent roaming secondhand bookstores, listening, collecting, trading, and educating himself about books. He applied his keen intellect to understanding the nuances and complexities of the book trade, and he was ready to apply that knowledge to his own enterprise. Henry's rapidly increasing expertise about books would be evident within a few years in his abilities as a cataloger and in his own published writings, impressive feats considering that the learning was obtained solely through his own initiative.

While Henry fulfilled obligations in Tucson, Patricia, with Judith, traveled to San Francisco to look for a place that would work as small bookstore, finding a suitable one at 3319 Sacramento Street near Presidio Avenue. Henry soon joined them, and by early 1945 H.H. Evans Bookseller was born. The premises on Sacramento Street were shared with Henry's two brothers, Jack and Sam, who owned an antiques business, S. & J. Evans Antiques. The business model of H.H. Evans Bookseller was fairly typical of the many similar establishments that flourished during that era. It was an open shop that maintained a large, general inventory of secondhand, antiquarian, and rare books. Catalogs were issued at regular intervals, the first in January 1945 followed by three more the same year. The first catalog, with over seven hundred titles, included Americana, color plate books, fine press printing, the classics, and literature of all periods in standard editions. Search services were offered, and though Henry did not stock new books, he advertised that he would order them upon request.

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H.H. Evans Bookseller was a success and within a few years had outgrown the Sacramento Street shop. In 1947 Henry moved the store closer to downtown, to 1167 Sutter Street near Polk, and with him went S. & J. Evans Antiques. The new location, with the business name slightly truncated to H.H. Evans Books and given the sobriquet "the barn" by Patricia and Judith, was larger. It was also conveniently located down the street from the Grabhorn Press, the famous letterpress printers who would encourage Henry's interest in printing, graphic design, and typography. The new shop was also near Butterfield & Butterfield, San Francisco's local auction house, where Jack Evans occasionally worked. In the spring of 1947, Henry was hired by Butterfield's to oversee the cataloging of the famous library of the collector Frederick W. Skiff, a testament to the respect he had gained as a bookman in the few short years he had been in San Francisco. The Skiff sale contained almost 2,700 lots sold over four days, and Henry managed to produce the catalog in four months. The Skiff catalog features the unusual acknowledgement, "catalog compiled under the direction of H.H. Evans," a credit Henry probably requested for a job of which he was justly proud.

Henry was becoming a redoubtably learned bookman. He skillfully handled and cataloged a variety of material, including early printed books, Americana, English and American literature, books about printing and typography, and modern literature, all of which he acquired locally and on buying trips to England. He would soon add authorship to his list of accomplishments. Henry's growing experience in the book trade together with the prodigious task of cataloging the Skiff books had reinforced his belief in the need for a dictionary of the arcane terms, definitions, and technical vocabulary of the trade—words and terms he had become accustomed to using, but which were not universally understood by others. To fill this void he compiled *A Guide to Rare Books*, issued under the imprint of the Porpoise Bookshop. Published in 1948, it was copyrighted by Patricia and printed by Haywood Hunt in San Francisco, who also printed Henry's catalogs. *A Guide* was Henry's first book and the first publication of a business that at the time existed in name only with a post office box—an arrangement Henry engineered to keep his publishing ventures separate from H.H. Evans Books and its silent partnership with his brother Jack. *A Guide's* seventy-two pages contain more than 1,800 entries—definitions, points, values, and

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information on bibliography, printing, binding, booksellers, papermaking, high spots, etc., with an occasional carefully inserted comment by the compiler. Though it has been superseded over the years by other more widely known and distributed works, Henry's handbook remains a worthy contribution to the literature of books about books, and it was one of the earliest comprehensive efforts of its kind.



Woodcut used in Peregrine Press announcements and advertisements

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During these formative years in the book trade, Henry was naturally drawn to San Francisco's numerous fine press printers, whose dealings with booksellers were then more closely intertwined than they are today. Henry befriended, among others, Ed, Robert, and Jane Grabhorn; Lawton and Alfred Kennedy; Adrian Wilson; Haywood Hunt; and Roger Levenson, who became a close friend. With their advice and support, in 1949 Henry fulfilled his long-held dream of purchasing his own printing press—an 1852 Washington iron hand press that had once belonged to the Grabhorns. It was immediately installed in the kitchen of the Evanses' second-story flat on Sacramento Street; with it the Peregrine Press was born and a new chapter began in their lives. Within a few months Henry printed a large broadside, dated San Francisco 1950, using as a printer's mark an engraving of a falconer and bird from Jean Baudoin's *Iconologie* (Paris, 1636). Beneath the caption-title "Why Peregrine?" were stated the reasons for the press and the philosophy behind it, both of which spoke volumes about its proprietor:

The name of the Peregrine Press has been chosen as an expression of the printer's belief that it is the right of the private press to wander, not aimless and without restraint, but freely, and without hindrance.

To establish a private press is one thing. To sustain it with force and purpose is quite another. The name of the press was chosen with premeditation and serious intent, believing that it is desirable to stray and wander, perhaps even exile oneself, in pursuit of thoughts, expressions, and designs.... The Peregrine Press will attempt to express concepts of tolerance and beauty. It will extoll progress and achievement in the arts. Special honors will be created for music, cookery and printing, as these most obviously are the three most important of the arts.

In addition to books, the press will issue various proclamations, broadsides, manifestos, ultimatums, statements of policy and decorative pieces honoring the birthdays of favorite geniuses. No reprints will be considered. The type used will be limited to Caslon, this being the most appropriate to the purposes of the press.

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While Henry studied the craft of letterpress printing—again, in this he was self-taught—H.H. Evans Books thrived. In a January 1950 advertisement in the book trade journal, the *AB Bookman's Weekly*, H.H. Evans Books boasted that it was the “largest second-hand bookstore on the West Coast.” Evidently no one disputed the claim. Henry became involved in the newly established Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of America, but he resisted joining the organization of his bookselling colleagues, thus showing—as he would on more than one occasion—that he had an individualistic disposition and was not temperamentally inclined to be a part of associations and clubs. And though the book business was financially successful, his interests were taking a new turn, albeit slowly, away from antiquarian books and towards letterpress printing and publishing. Had Henry thought that he could have made a sufficient living as a printer and publisher, he might have given up bookselling all together soon after purchasing his Washington hand press, but he knew that this possibility was several years away; in the meantime, the book business was an important source of financial support for the young Peregrine Press and the Evans family.

After the broadside “Why Peregrine?” came other early efforts of the press, mostly in the form of small broadsides and ephemeral pieces, including a business card for H.H. Evans Books; a postcard advertising *A Guide to Rare Books*; a brochure for *A Guide* with the tongue-in-cheek caption-title “Very Few Copies Left;” and a poetry broadside, *Lines of Tribute from L. R. Baskerville to Federico Garcia Lorca*, printed in an edition of twenty-five copies in April 1950. Henry also had plans for a variety of other, more substantial works, including a checklist of western bibliographies, a portfolio of Patricia's block prints accompanied by his essay on letterpress printing, and a magazine devoted to sonnets. However, on May 7 of that year, the San Francisco police rudely disrupted the Evanses' life and temporarily halted their plans when they raided H.H. Evans Books at 1167 Sutter Street. At some point in the preceding months a Yakima, Washington Postal Inspector named H. J. Simon had seen a catalog from H.H. Evans Books that listed, among hundreds of other titles, *Tropic of Capricorn* by Henry Miller, a book that had been banned in the United States. Simon sent a money order for the book and when it arrived he successfully petitioned the court in Yakima to obtain an indictment for the proprietors of H.H. Evans Books—then Henry, and Jack, as a silent partner—

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for sending obscene literature through the mail. On May 7, postal inspectors and police entered the bookstore with warrants and took everything they thought could be categorized as obscene, not only books by Henry Miller, but also copies of *Fanny Hill*, *Madame Bovary*, Voltaire's *La Pucelle*, and Lucian's *Dialogues*, among others. They also arrested the two Evans brothers and took them to jail. An attorney Henry and Jack hired counseled them not to fight the charges; they each paid a \$1,000 fine and were placed on five years' probation. Some of the confiscated books were returned to the bookstore and others, according to accounts in the newspapers, were burned at a police facility near Lake Merced.

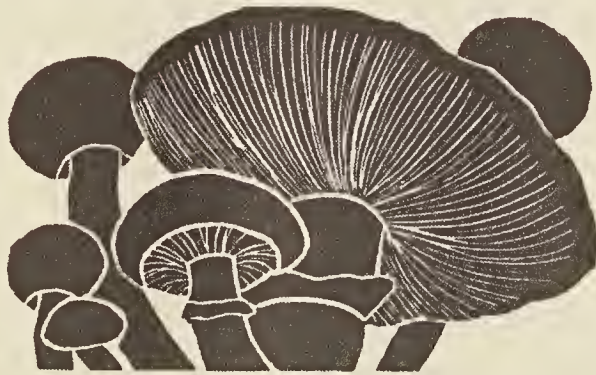
Henry put this troubling incident behind him and quickly returned to work on the first book of the Peregrine Press, an interesting and substantial work of ninety-four pages entitled *A Contribution Towards a Check List of Bibliographies and Reference Material Relating to the History of the States and Territories of the American West*. Henry called *A Contribution* his "practice piece," and it was not for sale. Seventy-five copies only were printed and all were distributed privately to librarians, collectors, and friends. Each copy was personalized with the name of the recipient on the colophon page, and the wrappers were decorated with finger-paintings by the Evanses' ten-year-old daughter, Judith—the debut of a new partner in the Evans family's bookish endeavors.

Soon followed a prospectus from the Peregrine Press, announcing the publication of *First Duet*, a collaboration between Henry and Patricia: "With unmitigated pleasure we hereby advise you of the completion of *First Duet*, a difficult to classify work of unruly dimensions and unflinching demeanor..." The text was an essay by Henry on the state of letterpress printing, a kind of manifesto, foreshadowing the work to follow from the Peregrine Press and Porpoise Bookshop. It begins, polemically: "The practice of taking a perfectly well known book and exploiting the familiarity of its contents by imposing on it a new set of illustrations is surely malignant." The illustrations in *First Duet* are colorful, large hard-rubber block prints, and, as the collaborators readily acknowledge, they are completely unrelated to the text. *First Duet* was the first of the portfolios that would become the signature format for many of the Peregrine Press publications, and it was also, at a cumbersome and unruly 22 ¼ x 15 ½ inches in size, the largest portfolio they ever published. In a catalog description of *First Duet* a few years later, Evans described it as a

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book of “kindly vitriol . . . which treats of book collecting, printing, private presses and the philosophy of libraries. When Jacob Blank reviewed this book he nearly had a fit! There is so much truth in it that it is really quite a bit to swallow . . . Definitely not a book for mollicoddles.”

The next few years saw some admirable letterpress work from Henry and the young Peregrine Press, or as he was occasionally calling it, “Officina Peregrinis.” This was the period before artists’ portfolios and printmaking began to dominate Henry’s focus and energy, and it was a period of transition in a career that saw several transitions. From the press came *Western Bibliographies*, a substantially revised edition of the first privately printed book from the press. *Western Bibliographies* was followed by *The Mycophagists’ Book*, an attractive mushroom cookbook written and illustrated by Patricia, and then in succession came *Anomalies*, a poem written by Henry and type-set by Judith, with a block print by Patricia; *Ten Nudes* by artist Edward Hagedorn, the second Peregrine Press portfolio of block prints; *Fourteen Poems* by O.V. de L. Milosz, also with illustrations by Hagedorn; and the charming *Alphabet Book*, written and illustrated by Patricia. *Alphabet Book* was printed in small folio (5 ½ x 4 inches), using twenty-nine colors. It was also the eighth and final title published under the imprint of the Peregrine Press.



In August 1952 Henry placed an advertisement in the *AB Bookman’s Weekly*, offering for sale the entire contents and equipment of H.H. Evans Books at 1167 Sutter Street. His silent partnership with his brother Jack had ended, and his new interests were becoming increasingly clear. Henry was enjoying

Linoleum block print by Patricia Evans for The Mycophagists’ Book, Peregrine Press, 1951

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the creative life he realized from his printing activities, and found that his leftish, aesthetic sensibilities were better expressed through working with artists, poets, and letterpress printing than through the book business; the romantic ideals he asserted as proprietor of the Peregrine Press were hardly consistent with the entrepreneurial requirements of an antiquarian bookseller and the sometimes roguish environment of the secondhand book trade. But though he sold the contents of H.H. Evans Books in the fall of 1952 and terminated the business name, for practical purposes Henry could not give up bookselling altogether.

In early 1953, Henry, Patricia, and Judith hatched a plan to open the dormant Porpoise Bookshop. One book had been published under its imprint—Henry's *A Guide to Rare Books*—but it had otherwise existed only as a post office address shared with the Peregrine Press. This bifurcated arrangement was no longer necessary; the Evanses merged the Porpoise Bookshop and Peregrine Press and opened a new shop, on Montgomery Street in downtown San Francisco, in a studio in the once-famous nineteenth-century building called the Monkey Block. The Porpoise Bookshop and Gallery was born, and henceforth all the publications of the Peregrine Press, with the exception of a few ephemeral pieces, were issued under the imprint of the Porpoise Bookshop.

Under the new order, Henry would work from home in the mornings, printing on the press in the basement of their Second Avenue house, while Patricia went downtown to open the shop. Later in the day Henry would take over at the shop, while Patricia tended to Judith as she returned from school. Sometimes, schedules and holidays permitting, it was not uncommon to find all three Evanses at the shop or working on the press, where Judith had become an accomplished young typesetter. In correspondence with librarian Richard Archer in 1952, Henry referred to Judith as his “devil and artist” and added: “daughter Judith is learning to set type and can now print some of the numerous books she has planned. Literary eleven year olds are a treasure.” Indeed, within a few years Judith had her own private imprint, the Grasshopper Press.

Catalog One of the Porpoise Bookshop was issued shortly after the move to Montgomery Street. In its preface, “By Way of Explanation,” the new partners wrote:

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In offering our first catalog from our new shop we feel it is necessary to explain our new policy and give you a brief description of our business. The firm H.H. Evans has existed under that name for about ten years now, and with the change of participants we feel that a change in nomenclature is fitting. H.H. Evans, along with his wife, Patricia Evans, and his daughter, Judith Evans, have formed a partnership in business to be styled The Porpoise Bookshop and Gallery. We will offer for sale old, out-of-print and rare books through catalogs and at the address above. We will supply books to libraries and individuals anywhere in the world ...

The fifteen-page catalog offered a variety of titles in Americana, bibliography, architecture, books about books, and English and American literature. There were also nine Peregrine Press imprints listed. On the rear cover was Henry's playful "An Alphabet for Bookmen," an obvious sign that the new partnership was off to an agreeable beginning.



Linoleum block print by Patricia Evans for Anomalies by Henry Evans, Peregrine Press, 1952

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An Alphabet for Bookmen by H. H. E.

A is for auction where records are made.
B is for bin where the Tamerlane laid.
C is for cropped, it should happen to a horse.
D is for dustwrapper; it's lost—great remorse.
E is for edge, none of them fore.
F is for foxed, a word we abhor.
G is for gilt, a Victorian sin.
H is for honor, the state we are in.
I is for inner, the hinge which is cracked.
J is for job-lot, it was never unpacked.
K is for Kokka, we'd all love a set.
L is for Latin, a noirish old bête.
M is for margins, where *authors* write notes.
N is for nihil, which obstat promotes.
O is for occult, a subject most weird.
P is for palimpsest, layered up like my beard.
Q is for quarto, for Quaritch, and quires.
R is for rubbed, here the veteran retires.
S is for shaken, 'tis hardly worth noting.
T is for torn, not worth much promoting.
U is for unique, (very few copies left).
V is for vandal, (don't confuse this with theft).
W is for woodcut, a very quaint thing.
X is for xylograph, the very same thing.
Y is for yapp, means divinity circuit.
(Z is for ZOUNDS! You surely o'er work it!)*

**The last line supplied by P.H.E.*

N.B. Those persons who did not find all of the terms used in the above poem in their immediate vocabularies will probably wish to purchase a copy of item number 30 in the present catalog: "A Guide to Rare Books" by H.H. Evans.

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To be continued next issue.

John Crichton is proprietor of the Brick Row Book Shop in San Francisco, and past president of the Book Club of California.



*Robert La Vigne illustration for The Condition of All Poetry by William Packard,
Porpoise Bookshop, 1957*

Richard Wagener in Conversation with Edwin Dobb

About Richard Wagener's *Zebra Noise*, Simon Brett, the elder statesman of wood engraving, has written, "No one I know of is making such avant-garde grand opera in wood engraved prints." The opera has been running for thirty-five years, including two books for the Book Club—*California in Relief* and *The Sierra Nevada Suite*—and the curtain is unlikely to come down anytime soon. Recently Club member Edwin Dobb talked with Richard about his work. The following is a revised excerpt from that conversation.

ED: As a fellow Westerner, I was struck by the similarity between the images in *California in Relief* and *The Sierra Nevada Suite* and the landscapes in Montana, where I grew up. But it was a long road you traveled from your childhood to doing books for the Club. Tell us about the origins of your art.

RW: When I was a kid all I knew was conventional figurative art, like that of Maynard Dixon. Then I happened to see Kazimir Malevich's *White on White*, a tilted white square on a larger white background. That puzzled me. It also intrigued me. I saw other abstract art, like Robert Motherwell's *Elegies*, which greatly expanded my sense of what art can be. Both forces—representation and abstraction—have influenced my work ever since. By the 1970s, I was in graduate school and doing large abstract paintings.

ED: Why did you switch to wood engraving?

RW: I wanted to do a holiday card. Making prints was the simplest way to do it. So I got a block of linoleum and some tools, cut an image of a fish, and printed it. The experience was a revelation. There was magic in pulling off that first print, very different from what I had been doing, and it was probably time for a change anyway. But I didn't like linoleum. I wanted something denser. At a bookstore in La Jolla I came across an image that stopped me in my tracks. It popped out at me. A wood engraving. At that moment, I realized what I wanted to do. The image showed the potential for creating something de-

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tailed with tonalities. Rather than buying a book on how to engrave, though, I decided to take my own journey and explore how the medium might serve my purposes, which are twofold. I have an interest in art, in making images. My graduate degree is in abstract painting. But my undergraduate degree is in natural science. Was there a way to give expression to that double background, a way of drawing upon both sides of myself? What would it mean, for instance, to put a bird against a grid? Or a moose inside an abstract shape? I was determined to find out.

ED: How did you enter the world of books?

RW: In 1990, I was invited to teach engraving at the Kala Institute, in Berkeley. On the last night of the class, a student's boyfriend arrived to pick her up. He saw my work and suggested we do a project together. The boyfriend was Peter Koch. Noticing the letter forms in my prints, he proposed an alphabet series. I started working on a block, based on the alphabet books of my childhood. The block was almost half-done when I showed it to Peter. He said traditional alphabet book imagery wasn't what he had in mind. Instead he liked what he had seen in my previous engravings, which incorporated abstract and realistic imagery. To hear that—I should be myself and do what I wanted to do—was liberating. After I engraved the twenty-six alphabet blocks, Peter and I discussed whether the series should become a portfolio of prints or a book. I like the tactile sensation of a book, being able to hold something in my hands, the intimacy, and the way it controls how I see things by presenting them in a sequence. But if it were going to be a book, should there be a text? I was uncomfortable entrusting my work to a stranger who might turn it into something I didn't like. Any text would have to be my text, which was sheer folly, since I had never written anything like that before. But that didn't stop me from trying. I drafted a couple dozen stories and, with some much-needed advice from a poet, did a lot of editing, eventually producing a text that complemented the images. Eight years after that fateful encounter with Peter, at Kala, I published my first book—*Zebra Noise*. It was suggested that one part of the deathwatch beetle story should be cut. But I left it in. And that's one of the things people liked most.

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ED: Looking back, *Zebra Noise* seems to have foreshadowed the work that followed.

RW: While I was engraving the alphabet blocks, I was certain I would exploit every aspect of engraving. I was combining abstract and representational elements but I knew at some point I would do wholly representational engravings and at another point I'd do wholly abstract ones. I wanted to take full advantage of the medium. Isn't that what it's all about? To see what an art form can do? While writing stories for *Zebra Noise*, I realized I needed to move in a different direction, to separate myself mentally. I didn't want to keep doing zebra noise images. In Joshua Tree National Park, I spotted an exotic-looking plant called the bladder pod. The natural scientist in me said, "Can I pull that off?" Because I hadn't done it before—rendered a detailed botanical figure in wood. Sure, I could engrave a splatter of ink, but could I do this? That led to a series of engravings of desert plants I found in the Huntington Library gardens.

ED: How did you go from plants to the bold abstract forms in *Parmenides*?

RW: It started with a vivid dream in which I was creating imagery, in color, of a fireball in the sky. When I woke up I went out to the studio and began engraving. After I finished, I printed it in color, blood red and brilliant yellow, another first for me. And the image was just like what I saw in my dream. The fireball. I did a couple more, then sent them to Peter, along with some of the writing I also was doing, which ultimately became *Cracked Sidewalks*, stories of my growing up in Los Angeles. Peter called immediately to say he loved the prints and thought they would go well with his new project, the second volume of a Pre-Socratics trilogy, and asked me if I would lend my work to the book.

ED: After which, true to form, you headed in the opposite direction—exquisite landscape realism.

RW: One day Peter observed that *Zebra Noise* is a western book, which was news to me. But he was right. It's imbued with a western sensibility. Especially the

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stories. Not surprising, when you think about it. I grew up in the West. That's what I know. That got me wondering about the influence of geography. In 2003, when I went up to Shuteye Peak, south of Yosemite, I started noticing specific rocks and trees. I wondered what I could do with what I was seeing. The resulting engravings evolved into *California in Relief* and *The Sierra Nevada Suite*. Most of the images depict objects in isolation. I wanted to avoid the grandeur cliché—the equivalent of hiking to the top of a peak and taking photographs of vistas. I wanted instead to pay attention to the small but spectacular things you might see during the hike up the mountainside.

ED: You've done four very different books with Peter. Describe your collaborative process.

RW: Peter is inclusive, which is wonderful. No matter what we talked about, binding or paper or anything else, it was always a dialogue between equals. One time when we were printing *Zebra Noise*, we were trying to determine how best to arrange one of the stories and a print. We must have passed the better part of an afternoon looking at minute changes in position. It reminded me of stepping back while painting, the long periods I spent reconsidering details before continuing to work. When planning the two panoramas that appear in *The Sierra Nevada Suite*, I was concerned about creating a problem for Peter by making images too large for the conventional page. He said to do whatever I wanted to do and he would design around it. That's music to an artist's ears. Being in Peter's studio was a real education. Back when we started I had little appreciation of typefaces, book design, how fine books are made. But now I'm much more discerning.

ED: Let's talk about your most recent book, which seems like both a breakthrough and a return to your origins.

RW: When I was printing *The Sierra Nevada Suite*, I thought about something I've been mulling over on and off for decades. The idea of a loom. A question came to me: How many threads does it take to make a weaving? Seven? Seventeen? I did three drawings and engraved them. Loose colored intertwined threads, sometimes frayed or fragmented, against a black background. Not

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exactly abstract, more conceptual. There was something very compelling about them. I met the poet Alan Loney at CODEX and sensed that his sensibility might be well-suited to the images. I asked if he would look at them and see if they resonated with him as they did with me. Eventually I made sixteen engravings. Alan contributed a book-length poem. Unlike previous projects, my process for *Loom* was organic, almost like painting. For the first three images I made pencil drawings on the blocks, and the engravings were faithful to them. After that I charted off smaller and smaller areas. I continued to draw lines on the blocks, to give myself a sense of direction, but I wouldn't complete the image. As the series progressed, the marks decreased, until the last block, which I left empty. I quickly toned the surface and started cutting. No drawing. No map. Like approaching a blank canvas.

ED: What's next?

RW: I'm working on a book called *Vestige*, which grew out of a special print for *Loom*. It's more painterly than *Loom*, with five engravings of tightly woven threads, somewhat distressed, and brushstroke-like gestures, against a subtle color background. Alan wrote another poem to accompany the images. That's what I'm printing now.

Vestige will debut at CODEX V, in early February. At the same time, Richard Wagener will show his work in the exhibition *Copper & Wood: One Hundred Years of California Printmaking*; Roi Partridge and Richard Wagener at Mills College, Oakland, January 25-March 13.

Richard Wagener is a master wood-engraver and printer who lives in northern California. He illustrated the Book Club's 2009 publication California in Relief, and 2013 companion volume The Sierra Nevada Suite.

Edwin Dobb is a writer who teaches at the U.C. Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism.

Review: *Bookworks 2014*, the Fifteenth
Pacific Center for the Book Arts Members Exhibition

by Steve Woodall

The Pacific Center for the Book Arts was formed in 1978 as a professional organization for artists and craftspeople. Its most visible products have been *Ampersand*, a journal edited for more than fifteen years by Alastair Johnston, and the biennial (now triennial) members exhibition at the San Francisco Public Library. This show has long been in rotation at that venue with exhibitions, on alternate years, of work from the Hand Bookbinders of California and the Friends of Calligraphy, two other venerable Bay Area organizations. The PCBA show is the most inclusive of these, tilting towards artists' books but including also more traditional high-craft work from fine printers and binders. This year, 122 works were on display, filling the library's large sixth-floor exhibition space. The exhibition was beautifully designed by the organizers, Kathleen Burch and John McBride, with several public presentations by artists discussing their work.

Perhaps the exhibition's most telling characteristics, now and in the past, have been the membership's high level of skill, conceptual sophistication, and prodigious output—especially considering that this has always been a non-juried exhibition, with all entries put on display. Few artists have had the temerity to show anything not of true exhibition quality. Though PCBA has members all over the West Coast—the exhibition always features extremely impressive work from Los Angeles and elsewhere—it is largely a Bay Area/Santa Cruz group, and it is fair to say that this year's show demonstrated beyond a doubt the prominence of Northern California in the world of the handmade book.

Though of course these two features are not in opposition, the importance of content vs. craft is always a hot topic of discussion in artist book circles. Of the two, the most essential element, a book's *raison d'être*, is its content, which in an artist's book can be defined as exploration of a text or concept through some combination of typography, design, structure, visual elements, and materials. It was clear that the organizers, and in general the artists, see the book as a precious object above all in relation to how well it

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presents its literary or conceptual substance. As book artists mature to increasingly privilege content above gimmickry or empty craft, the work becomes more meaningful, more delightful, and altogether more impressive. Carolee Campbell, for example, stands out as one of several printer/artists who use their formidable and hard-won craftsmanship not for its own sake but in service to the material they present (in Carolee's case poetry) and that was true of very many artists, printers or not, in this show.

So it was possible to look at this more as an exhibition of the presentation of concepts, stories, and poems than as a display of art objects—the book as the medium but also the message. Many of our presses have been deeply ingrained within the Bay Area literary tradition, and *Bookworks* brought out that history beautifully, with work by Graham Mackintosh/Jack Spicer, Alastair Johnston, Wesley Tanner, Marie Dern/Richard Siebert/Léonie Guyer/Bill Berkson, and many more (it must be noted that there is no way to discuss individual books here, given space limitations, without leaving out many, many books worthy of special mention).

In a show like this, it's always a good indication of the health of a community to find impressive work by newcomers here and there alongside old and familiar names. Though he is clearly an accomplished and celebrated illustrator, a book by Christopher Carroll, in collaboration with the Peter Koch studio and with a binding by John DeMerritt, stood out in this regard—but there were many impressive books attached to unfamiliar names this year. This kind of vitality does not exist in a vacuum. The rich and truly world-class resources of the Bay Area support a culture of bookmaking that is unique, with a level of activity perhaps unmatched anywhere. The San Francisco Center for the Book, approaching its twentieth anniversary, provides an entry point for many newcomers, and sustaining support as well. With great university libraries, the Logan collection at the Achenbach, the matchless biennial CODEX fair, the Grabhorn Institute, and venerable membership organizations such as the Book Club of California, and the Roxburghe and Colophon clubs, it would be difficult to find an environment anywhere better suited to the support of fine presses and book artists.

It may be important to mention that this exhibition was not limited to new work—both Paul Vangelisti and Betsy Davids, for example, showed decades-old, but still inspiring, work that added some temporal perspective.

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It was particularly good to revisit Davids' and Jim Petrillo's compelling and original *Books & Changes*, a bookwork from 1981. There was also at least one book that was more than a decade in the making: Dorothy Yule's *Memories of Science*, with its ingenious movable elements, has appeared in exhibitions in various configurations since the late '90s, and has evolved into a refined masterpiece of design.

Emily McVarish, whose books are published nationally by Granary Books in New York, is among the best-known and most highly respected local book artists. Represented here by her latest project, *Quickstead*, McVarish's work evolves from the European avant-garde, filtered through the demanding constraints of a letterpress studio, in a time-shifted conversation with El Lissitzky, Jan Tschichold, and Walter Benjamin, with open field text presentation providing the narrative in a cut-up style of composition reminiscent of William Burroughs.

Such determinedly avant-garde practice is not the mainstream in Bay Area book art, but McVarish's work also carries forward a tradition of the marriage of European-influenced typographic presentation with literature, coming through Jack Stauffacher and the Paul Vangelisti/John McBride collaborations of Red Hill Press, among others. It is important that the show include such work, and it was presented here in a way that led viewers to consider the relationships. It was also important to see it in the context of Dennis Letbetter's photo work, and Judith Selby Lang's deconstructed book object, and Saul Rosenfeld's architectural/pictorial collaboration with Rob Marks, to name only a few diverse approaches to the book.

Bookworks 2014 was a fitting tribute to a community of serious artists, presented in a manner that showed their work off to great effect, and its organizers deserve recognition for putting together perhaps the most impressively mounted exhibition in the show's history.

Steve Woodall is director of the Center for Book and Paper Arts at Columbia College, Chicago. Previously he was education and artistic director at the San Francisco Center for the Book from the time of its founding in 1996 until 2008, and served as president of Pacific Center for the Book Arts from 1993 through 1996.

Border Crossing

by Gary Young

DOC/UNDOC *Documentado/Undocumented Ars Shamánica Performática*, a sequel to Moving Parts Press's 1998 CODEX ESPANGLIENSIS, possesses an energy and camaraderie that seems to shout, "We're getting the band back together!" Given the performance aspects of this project, that's hardly an exaggeration. In this new work, Felicia Rice has again joined forces with performance artist/writer Guillermo Gómez-Peña and art historian/critic Jennifer González, and has invited video artist Gustavo Vazquez and sound artist/engineer Zachary Watkins to join in the fray. The result, a seven-year collaboration, is staggering in its complexity and variety. There are many moving parts in this Moving Parts Press production.

As was the case with CODEX ESPANGLIENSIS, Rice has taken performance texts by Guillermo Gómez-Peña, and integrated them into a series of bold relief prints that have been bound as a thirty-foot concertina. Unlike the CODEX, which utilized the collages of artist Enrique Chagoya, in DOC/UNDOC Rice has taken her own images, manipulated and integrated Gómez-Peña's text typographically, and modeled them into an extravagant series of prints. Each of the fifteen spreads is lush with layers of brilliant ink overprinted to produce rich, luxuriant, almost hallucinogenic effects.

Gómez-Peña's performance scripts are by their nature theatrically charged, and at times willfully outrageous, but most of his texts are sensitive tales, parables that deal with issues of identity and culture. The sharp bite of racism is addressed here, as are the psychic, personal, and political ramifications of living in a world defined by borders that must be crossed and crossed again, but Gómez-Peña's texts are melancholy, tender, and poignant. In *Have you ever experienced an identity meltdown?* he writes, "I woke up and went to the bathroom to shave. I looked at my face in the mirror (I touch my face in various ways) and told my reflection, 'Remember me? I used to be ... Mexican. There used to be a Mexican inside this body, but something happened in the process and I became ...' I had forgotten what I had become."

The transformations necessary to traverse the borders of our multicultural, multi-lingual landscape are at the heart of this project. But there

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is more to this enterprise than the book itself. DOC/UNDOC contains adjunct productions. The book comes in a clamshell box made by Craig Jensen of BookLab II, which also houses a pamphlet containing essays by Rice and González, and disks of a video collaboration between Vazquez and Gómez-Peña. A deluxe edition of fifteen includes an aluminum case that holds the book and its supplements, as well as an alter and a “cabinet of ritual curiosities.” Opening the case triggers lights and Watkin’s sound art, and there are buttons that launch specific compositions. The case contains, among many other things, glasses, a stethoscope, a Lucha Libre wrestling mask, and we are invited to “choose an object, find a poetic way of using it. Reimagine yourself, tell a new story.” In one of the audios, we hear questions any reader might ask: “So what is it? A curiosity cabinet of the pagan and the marvelous? A border kit to face the uncertainty of the future? A conceptual kit to cross multiple borders?” Of course, it is all of these things and more.

Stéphane Mallarmé’s famous dictum “le monde est fait pour aboutir à un beau livre” (“the world was made to end up in a beautiful book”) might well have served as an epigraph to the whole production. Here we have a book within a book, within a box, within a case, and it begs the question, could a room have been built to contain the case, and a house to contain the room? This sequence might well end at a city, which is what DOC/UNDOC most resembles, with its neighborhoods, its cul-de-sac, and its amorphous edges. The book reaches beyond its authors to embrace anyone who might pass by (or through) its reach. Its inclusive nature renounces boundaries, and suggests a kind of limitless progression rather than a discreet, intimate utterance. This may have resulted in a trade-off of intimacy for community, but we are left with a book that wants to hold the reader, the way readers ordinarily hold a book.

DOC/UNDOC *Documentado/Undocumented Ars Shamánica Performática*, Moving Parts Press, 2015. An edition of fifty copies of the accordion-fold book features Gómez-Peña’s performance texts and Rice’s relief prints and typography. Critical commentary by Jennifer González and other essays appear in an accompanying pamphlet. Gustavo Vazquez and Guillermo Gómez-Peña’s video collaboration and Zachary Watkins’ sound art are housed with the book and pamphlet in a clamshell book box. Book: 17 ¾” x 11 ½” x 1 ½”—

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extends to 31'6". A deluxe edition of fifteen copies is housed in unique hi-tech aluminum cases containing a mirrored altar, and a cabinet of curiosities such as custom-made Mexican wrestling masks and ritual objects. Opening the case and handling the objects within triggers Watkins' sound art. Case: 18 3/4" x 24 7/8" x 5 1/2" with altar, ritual objects, and interactive sound.

Gary Young, editor of Greenhouse Review Press, is a poet, artist, and printer. He teaches creative writing and directs the Cowell Press at the University of California Santa Cruz. A selection of his poems is featured in the Club's most recent publication, Poetry at the Edge: Five Contemporary California Poets, edited and designed by Carolee Campbell, printed by Norman Clayton.



The Book Club is offering a limited number
of unbound copies of its latest publication,
Poetry at the Edge: Five Contemporary California Poets.
The unbound price is \$150 (the published price is \$200).
Exquisitely designed and illustrated with photographs
by master book artist Carolee Campbell, this letterpress
volume features poems by Joseph Stroud, Kay Ryan,
Gary Young, Martha Ronk, and Michael Hannon.

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News from the Library

*A Circle of Friends: Ward Ritchie, Lawrence Clark Powell, and
Gloria Stuart, Collected by Albert Sperisen and Barbara Jane Land*

by Henry L. Snyder

Since we moved into our new quarters, the library of the Book Club of California has been fortunate to receive a number of remarkable donations. By the strength of these gifts, we have been able to build real depth at certain places in our collection. They add considerably to our library's status as a resource for research, and they enhance our ability to demonstrate both the breadth as well as the achievement of California printers. We first achieved this depth in our own publications, books, keepsakes, and announcements. In 2012, a generous gift of Burke material from Virginia Mudd and Clifford Burke gave us a comprehensive collection of the work of a single printer, a principal figure in the flowering of the San Francisco fine printers in the postwar era. The formal agreement by the Roxburghe Club with the Book Club to house the former's archive of printed works gave us a third San Francisco focal point. The recent gift of Barbara Jane Land's own vast Roxburghe collection has filled out our Roxburghe holdings. In like manner the establishment of the Book Club as the archive for the Moxon Chappel gave us an extended representation of a myriad of printers in the San Francisco Bay area. The gift from Carol Cunningham of Sunflower Press imprints and her collection of miniatures from friends and colleagues gave us a new dimension in miniatures. This was increased in richness by the gift of two additional miniature collections created by Marilyn Poole Adams (Poole Press) and Marvin Hiestram and Lloyd Nielsen (Juniper von Phitzer Press). The gift of Margot and Perry Biestman of the Grabhorn Press Collection of Florence Walter capped these with the output of the most famous, and one of the most prolific of San Francisco presses. But all of these riches have been centered on San Francisco printers and presses. So it is with great pride that we announce the gift of the Ward Ritchie Collection formed by Albert Sperisen and augmented by Barbara Jane Land, which now comes home to the Book Club through the generosity of Barbara's sisters and heirs, Helen Land and Francis A. Moore.

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The Ward Ritchie collection is of special significance for several reasons. The press of Ward Ritchie (1905-1991) was based in Los Angeles so we now have appreciable holdings representing the southern part of the state. Ward was a versatile man—designer, printer, lecturer, poet, and historian of the press in his region. But even more, through the close friendships he formed, the collection goes well beyond the scope and interests of Ward himself. In grammar school Ward developed a friendship with Lawrence Clark Powell (1906-2001), librarian, raconteur, novelist, and writer, who became as respected and famous in his sphere as Ritchie was in his. Both men were exceptionally prolific. Both lived to an advanced age and interacted throughout their long lives. Ward published, introduced, and designed Powell's works. Powell reciprocated by contributing to Ward's publications. The circle of friends kept expanding. A poem by the poet Robinson Jeffers, *Stars*, was one of Ward's earliest publications. Powell's first book was the dissertation he wrote on Jeffers for his doctorate at the University of Dijon. Both Ward and Larry were involved in publishing Jeffers' works throughout the poet's life. The food writer M.F.K. Fisher, the booksellers Jake Zeitlin and Glen Dawson, the printers Saul Marks and Vince Gerry, the illustrator Paul Landacre, the bookbinder Joe D'Ambrosio, the publisher George Macy, were among the many other collaborators with whom both men interacted. The core was always Ward and Larry and their wives.

In later years, there was one more notable addition. In their youth, Ward and his then-wife, Janet, were good friends of Gloria Stuart (1910-2010) and her husband, the sculptor Brian Gordon Newell. Ward and Newell were college fraternity brothers. Newell and Gloria knew Jeffers and drove Ward to Monterey to finally meet the poet. Gloria was a gifted and versatile artist and actress. When Ward's wife died in 1981, Gloria, at that point a widow, and Ward renewed their friendship and developed a loving and romantic relationship that lasted until Ward's death. At the age of seventy-two Gloria was taught the mechanics of printing by Ward and quickly developed a reputation in her own right as a book artist and printer. She continued to produce books until the ripe age of one hundred.

In 1942 Ward took an extended leave of absence from his printing business. First he went to work for Douglas Aircraft Company, producing training manuals. Then he moved on to be production manager of Foote, Cone &

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Belding, the largest advertising firm in Southern California. He remained until 1950 when he returned to the firm he founded. It was at Foote, Cone & Belding that he became friends with art director and later vice-president of the agency, Albert Sperisen.

Albert Sperisen (1909-1999) was an avid bibliophile and collector. Collections he formed now repose at the William Andrews Clark Library, the Gleeson Library, and Stanford University, where he was named honorary curator of typography. Sperisen became an expert in the fields of graphic design, fine printing, and typography. He formed two private presses and designed books for others. On four occasions he received awards from the American Institute of Graphic Arts in New Yorks for his book designs. He joined the Book Club in 1937 and when the Club formed a library in the 1950s he became its librarian, a post he held to his death. It was Albert who laid out the collection development plan, which is still followed today. He was also involved in the Club's publications and exhibitions. One of the last exhibitions he mounted was of the work of Gloria Stuart. Gloria described him after his death as her "boon companion" and "a true friend. He enriched my life." Albert joined the circle of friends and was the recipient of books, ephemera, pamphlets, letters, and cards from all three. This was the basis of his collection.

Barbara Land (1945-2013) served as Sperisen's assistant during the years in which he formed our library and laid down its guiding precepts. Sperisen was her mentor and friend. Barbara worked faithfully alongside him and then succeeded him as the Book Club's librarian carrying on his traditions and interests. She acquired the Ritchie-Powell-Stuart collection from Sperisen for her personal collection and continued to add to it until her death. Both Albert and Barbara made sure that these three printers were well-represented in the Book Club's library. Indeed, many of the items in the library bear an inscription from one of the three, marking the book as a gift to Albert and the library. The remarkable end to this story is that when the Sperisen-Land collection was incorporated into the Library we found that it complemented rather than duplicated our holdings, for the most part. Through the munificent gift of Barbara's sisters these two collections—one personal, one institutional—are now united in the repository that is itself the fruit of a long collaboration between Albert and Barbara.

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To date we have cataloged about 400 items in the collection and have at least another 50 to go. Ritchie appears in 311 entries, Ward Ritchie in 258, Lawrence Clark Powell in 119, Gloria Stuart in 18. There is some overlap. In addition to the books and pamphlets there are clippings, letters, articles about Ward, and catalogs. The collection is hardly exhaustive. Ward published some fifty cook books. He was much in demand as a designer. He designed seventy-five books for the University of California Press alone. But the collection does give examples from the full range of his works as well as those of Gloria and Powell. And you can be sure that now we have the collection we will continue to enrich it! An exhibition of the collection will open Monday, January 26, at the Book Club. With this latest addition to the holdings of the library we now finally have a firm Southern California pillar. Above all we have a collection built upon five friendships, which celebrates and honors friends and colleagues whose contributions have enriched our Library.

Henry Snyder is the Book Club of California librarian.

Southern California Sightings

by Carolee Campbell

Alas, there have been no sightings to report for this issue of the *QN-L*. In light of the extreme heat across the southland all summer, it seems southern California just napped.

Carolee Campbell is the proprietor of Ninja Press, which is now in its thirtieth year, in Sherman Oaks, California.

☞ Note from the Book Club: Carolee has also been hard at work in recent months completing *Poetry at the Edge: Five Contemporary California Poets*, for which she donated the remarkable gift of her time, talent, and extraordinary intelligence in designing, editing, illustrating, and overseeing the production of the Club's exquisite publication #233.

Creative Writing Students at the Book Club

The Book Club is happy to report an ongoing collaboration with the Ruth Asawa School of the Arts Creative Writing program, initiated by Club member Kathy Barr whose granddaughter, Abigail Schott-Rosenfield, graduated from the program in 2014. So far, the Club has hosted two readings by the students, including their senior thesis reading last May, with this year's senior thesis reading scheduled to take place at the Club on Monday, May 4. Last August, director of the writing program Heather Woodward brought her students in for a tour of the BCC collection with librarian Henry Snyder. Here are a few of their responses:

Molly Bond:

I am touching the skin of a calf. The skin is adorned with perfectly aligned severe handwriting that represents a story. The calf died six hundred years ago, and the story was written by a scribe who lived in a totally different world than I; yet by virtue of his writings, he is made just as human and existent. This is a hard concept for me to swallow. When someone is that far dead, that long gone, it is difficult to comprehend that they, too, existed; that they, too, wrote stories. They felt the same ache in their wrists from hours of writing, the same frustration when misspelling a word. It is not often I am presented with undeniable proof of the ability of fragile, peeling words to persevere throughout history, traveling from mind to mind throughout the ages.

If this piece of writing has lasted that long, through wars and colonizations, the emergences of disappearances of cultures, can my writing also survive? Will a group of students in the year 2614 gather around the pages of my manuscript, touching the browned paper and marveling over its being made from trees? It stresses me out a little bit. Nobody knows what will disappear, and what will remain. A stupid poem I wrote could, hypothetically, last a millennium; or, more likely, it will be incinerated by a trash compactor before my next birthday. I wonder whether these scribes thought their words would last; would they have any concept of this vast array of time? Would they be able to believe how much society has changed since they scratched their pens upon vellum?

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If I could write something on a piece of paper, and know that it would be read six hundred years from now, this is what I would write:

“Hello. I am Molly. I am just as alive as you are.”

Harmony Wicker:

In the past, what I thought made a book worth buying was the story within it. I never considered the fact that it could be the cover, or the way a book is bound. After visiting the Book Club of California, another side of literature that I never knew existed opened up right in front of me. As Henry Snyder... talked about the Grabhorn Brothers and all the elements that went into making a book, I had to refrain from crying with delight.

The history of bookmaking excited me like nothing else. Henry Snyder's passion for the history of literature was engaging and piqued my interest in the subject. As I listened to him speak, I was fascinated by how much he knew. His wealth of knowledge was impressive.

When our class left the exhibit, I couldn't help but take notice of how much technology has taken over our world. Because we are always plugged into some sort of device, we often forget what is so appealing about holding a real book in our hands. Though I read a lot, I have never taken notice of how much care goes into making a book.

After going to the Grabhorn Brothers exhibit and learning about various types of paper, the different book publishers from the past and present, and seeing how you make a book any size and shape, I felt a strong need to continue to learn more about bookmaking. This exhibit has made me realize the intricate details in the process of making a book. In the future, I hope to revisit the Book Club of California, and truly enjoy the books they own.

Josie Weidner:

The field trip to the Book Club of California aroused conflicting emotions within me. Immediately following the trip, I had dinner with my mom, during which I headily criticized the BCC and its dusty, old books. Calmly, she provided a different perspective on my disapproval, one that helped me to clarify the debate stewing inside me.

At first, I found the ancient books fascinating. Being able to view pages of writing from thousands of years ago was truly remarkable, and it gave me

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the feeling that I was apart of something bigger. In that moment, writing became this shared art that stretched far back into the past. I harnessed a new appreciation for the printing press, the bold, black ink just as mesmerizing as the intricate artwork on the covers.

However, as we got into the prices of these books, some so expensive and valuable they were locked away, I started to feel different. I felt like we were using these extraordinary relics of creative art as some pawn in our society's economic game. Not to blame the BCC, or our wonderful tour guide, but I wondered at those kinds of prices, who realistically could purchase these books? These books are a preservation of an ageless culture, why couldn't they be free for all to see? I understand that they are delicate, but what are they worth locked away, gathering dust? I thought about how I would want my writing to be treated in a thousand years. I would want it to be shared with all, passed around a kitchen table, a school lunch table, a library desk. And in that moment, these books became somewhat of a superficial aspect of our culture. A frivolous collector's item.

Maybe I was being too critical. Stepping back, I understand that the BCC in no way represents a shallow organization with the only goal of making money. I understand that these old books are probably available for anyone to take a gander at, and that the BCC strives to take best care of them so a thousand years down the road, people will still be able to appreciate their splendor.

Never has a field trip stirred such a whirlwind of reactions for me, and I am grateful for this. Now I see that I want everyone to be able to enjoy these books, and the culture of writing and the printing press. I have an instilled hope now to make this possible, and for that, this field trip was truly inspirational.

Davis DuBose-Marler:

I accidentally touched the Kelmscott Chaucer. We'd been herded into a small room lined with locked bookshelves inside the Book Club of California. The books that were under lock and key were even more alluring than the ones we were allowed to look at up close. Like our guide, we all treated the books with the utmost care, making sure to turn the pages slowly, which sent waves of old book fragrance into the atmosphere, a scent that cannot be bottled.

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Looking at the pieces of writing on display that have survived for centuries was a powerful experience. I felt a connection to the people around me, with whom I share a love for literature, and also with the writers who came before us: our pioneers with pens.

One book stood out to me more than the rest, and that is *Winter Orchard* by Carl Dern. Although it was wordless, I became enamored with the simple line drawings of bare trees. Included in the book's box was a delicate wire sculpture of a similar tree, about six inches tall. Only fifty copies of this book exist.

The current exhibition was of ephemera that had been made not for pleasure, but for profit—invitations, menus, birthday cards, and other items often only enjoyed for a short period of time, which have been given an extended life thanks to the care of collectors.

Many if not all of the books at the BCC are rare and/or expensive. The Kelmscott Chaucer I accidentally touched was worth \$150,000. That may be the priciest thing I've ever come in contact with.

The Cookbook Library

Four Centuries of the Cooks, Writers, and Recipes That Made the Modern Cookbook
Anne Willan

Inside the California Food Revolution

Thirty Years That Changed Our Culinary Consciousness
Joyce Goldstein

The Georgian Feast

The Vibrant Culture and Savory Food of the Republic of Georgia
Darra Goldstein

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New Members

REGULAR

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James Dodge II	San Francisco
J. Timothy Falney	San Francisco
Barbara Franzoia	San Francisco
Darra Goldstein	Williamstown, MA
Wende Gustamachio	Oakland
Anita Kay Hardy	Boise, ID
Lori Hughes	El Sobrante
Gail Jones	San Rafael
Heather Knape	San Francisco
Richard (Terry) Koch	San Francisco
Tom Lederer	El Cerrito
Isabel Moore	San Francisco
Francis Morrissey	Eliot, ME
Albert Nalbandian	San Francisco
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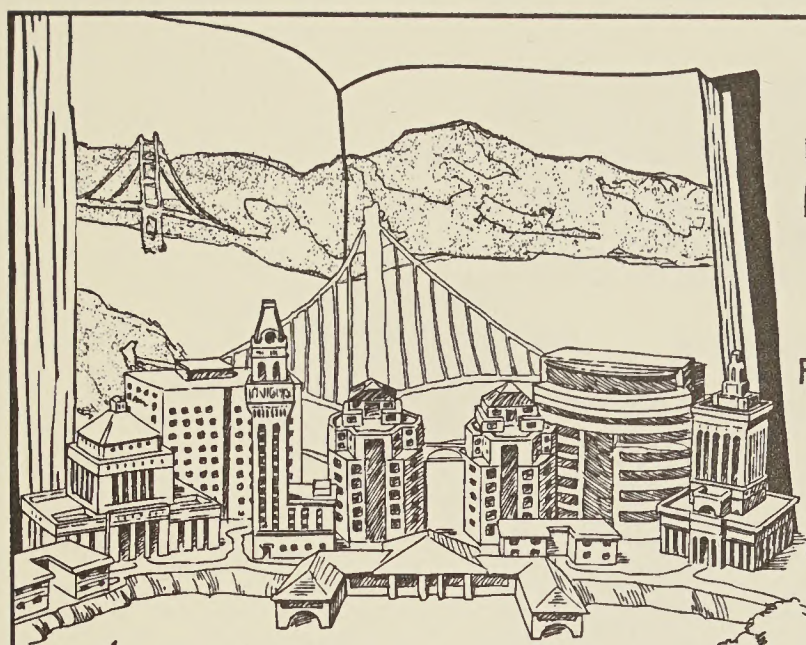


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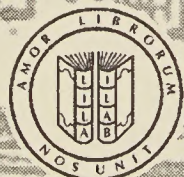
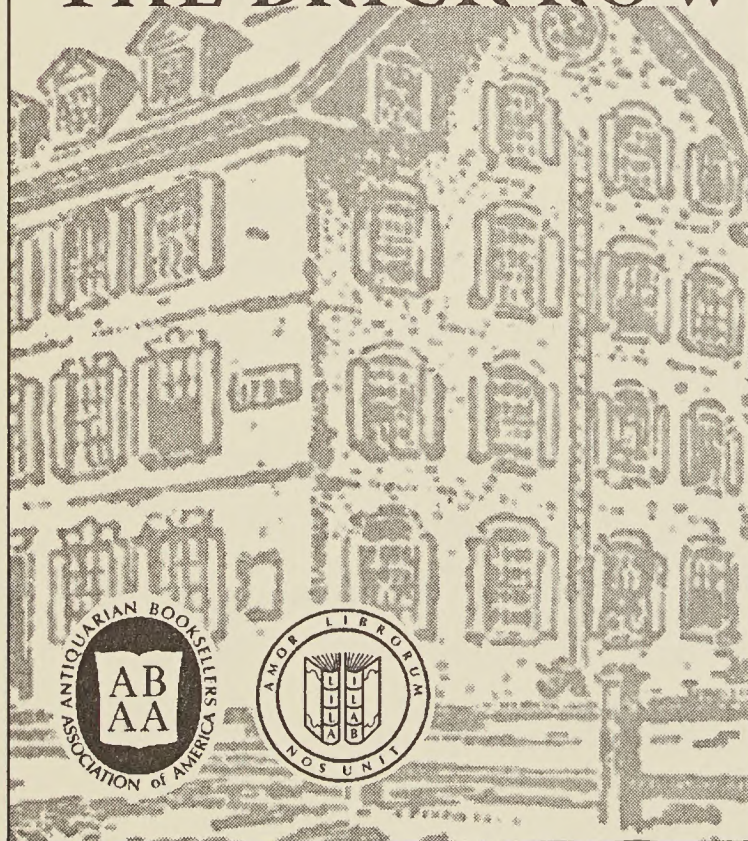


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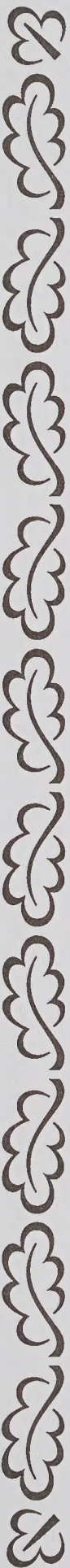
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